My dearest Maria –

Rome January 14th 1822

Your letter gives me inexpressible pleasure, since I never changed – may be – you are mechanged in my mind, and ever will be. – Your long silence has grieved me sadly – and the more I have tried to explain it, the more I have been in the dark – however I am satisfied the fault is not forgotten, for some letter or fault of mine towards me, and the next kind communication I think I explained in Father's letter that I wished my picture of "Cordelia" ~~[illegible]~~ "Cordelia awaiting by the bed of Lear" – You will find it like the same scene in my former pictures, as the same frame will do. I am delighted at its going to Mr Boyd's and feel very grateful to him – Have written the Duke of Bedford & his brother to see it soon as I can & tell them where it is – I send enclosed the paper for Boydell & Richards – you must tell me really how you like this work of mine, and if Mr Boyd likes it – And be my dear Maria you think the world has changed me, for speaking of Charles you say "Heaven grant it may never change him" – now I would like to know sincerely and truly whether I am changed in your eyes, and how you think of me – Were I to judge myself, and it is a hard task, I should say I am the same as when you listened to my Harpsichord, and when I painted the Fairy Queen, – but I am aware that I aspired in secret after greatness and distinction, and now meeting there I cannot tell what changes they have wrought in me – One I hope above all, that my love for my dear sister Maria is unchanged, yet were of this you dont seem assured. – I fear the "great Summer" has had much to do with it, as it is but a broken promise – and a little promise is love – and that to a sister, must be a change in me – tell me frankly all you think of me – Your letter is a heartfelt one, and full of information, my sister Patty Boydell I am glad to hear – I hope he has made a fortune, and I shall see him in Rome – Mr Severn I have not yet seen, nor do I know that he is in Rome – I have met many friends here whom I knew in England. – Your account of Charles's little fanciful doings – I never like advice of this nature, for unless [illegible]

"O you kind gods
"Cure this great breach in his abused nature!
"The untuned and jarring senses O wind up
"Of this child-changed father ——
"Is this a face
"To be exposed against the warring winds?
"To stand the deadly dread bolted thunder?
—— Look there look
"He wonders that my life and wits at once
"Has not concluded all – *

Vide King Lear. Act. 4th Sc. 7th

has a fortune, it must be a misfortune to him, as he is still unsettled— he would be having cares and ties whilst at his age and his beginning he ought not to have and hope he will get out of love, however discovery the object, and only think of getting on in his Profession— Why did you let him dine there on Tues day— — We had our usual 6 men dinner of 12 friends at my house, and as usual it was very merry— They are a worthy set of fellows here, and he is in favor— I would like to delay this letter, to tell you what I am daily expecting to hear— no less than an order for a large picture 15 by 9 feet— It is a sacred subject, and will be 2 or three years work, and a great triumph for me— — You will at all events think well of me when you think of my Painting, and as I can write excellent when I am advised that I should make every thing now that you cannot but think well of my stay in Italy, where my Painting is like to thrive— — I wish express that this year presents little or no prospect of returning— I have eleven pictures on hand which will take me all this year, if not more, and I propose staying in Rome to do them— Bye the bye, one is an order from my noble friend the Lady Westmoreland to whom I owe all my success in Italy— Her Ladyship shows me more and more attention, I am taken up by her to the most magnificent Parties and introduced to the highest people, who buy my pictures and treat me as a Gentleman— The Prince Leopold was one of these, and if it was not that you cannot be interested with a list of Lords & Ladies, I could send you 20 more to whom you would be grateful on my account— You will be surprised to know that I am the only Artist here who is in this footing with the Nobility, and I have got so far that I succeed in procuring many orders for my brother Artists, by whom I am respected in the highest degree, for which I am not a little proud— So you will easily understand my dear Mary, why I do not leave Italy— here I am what I wish to be— in England I might be nothing, that is as yet— pardon me that I have bored you with so long a letter, but I have done it to justify my stay in Italy— — —

I have the greatest anxiety to see you all, with the many arrears I have in letters of years— I fear I shall find all changed even more than my self— will not this letter find you abroad? all you all forget me— for I cannot [illegible] you— My Father & Mother you say are quite recovered again, this gratifies me a little I am delighted to hear of it, and of their well being— — —

Tell K. Falconer I see our friends the Paraphrases are really going with a flash. Clint is singing at Naples with the greatest success. Mr. Pompeii is removed to the Castle of S. Angelo in Rome, and Chandler is staying with an English family as Governess. Tell my friend Mr. Walker that I have not forgotten to write him, but wish to write something definite to, for which I have waited so long. But I'll write very soon, having now made up my mind. Pray remember me to him very kindly ——

I am sorry to find that Mr. J. Sharp does not come out to Italy, where all England seems to come, pray remember me to him, and I hope he will come here and study Painting. You will wish to know if I am married or intend to be — or one, or another the other. I am too aspiring for the limits of a married life, or an establishment of — When I marry it shall be to increase my fortunes as well as my happiness. It shall be for great talents or fortune, and certainly never for more love or beauty. So you will easily see that I am like to be an old Bachelor — at least as long as the high Dukes care for me, and I do not want nursing. After I'll hope that some one will petty me. What do you say to this — but you'll say there is no excuse for a man to think thus, who has a beautiful Love like mine. The winter is very fine. so far we had about 10 days rain and all the rest like a Spring. but it was not the case last year, which was nearly all rain — I am at this moment painting a picture similar to my Vintage. it is an Italian — for you know that here they have not ceased at all the fine weather as sometimes you English have. Two Italians take petch their water in pitchers of the same picturesque form. One kind of mine represents a beautiful country scene of a Fountain with the town in the distance and the peasant girls are petching (here forth) the water — One is playing on his pipe, whilst his Goats drink. NB out of the following

To Messrs. Bingham & Richards — Rome January 15th 1828.

Please to deliver my picture representing "Cordelia watching by the bed of Lear" to my father Mr. James Severn for the purpose of being exhibited at Somerset House — and after with you please to forward it to the owner —

I am Gentlemen — Your obliged Servt.

Joseph Severn

[illegible] him [illegible]

— And so now my dear Annie I must wish you good bye — hoping that I shall soon hear of you again and in just such a letter as your last — Take me if you can Miss McPherson — And take me if my Ps sweetheart Miss Livingston is married or no — Also remember me to Mr & Mrs Pat — say I hope to see them in Rome one of these days — Remember me to all friends and give my dearest love to my Father & Mother — and the new bride Sarah — & the harmonic Tom and his sweet Caroline — and blooming family the love gone Charles, and "bro' last not least" a love my dear & Charlotte & Giles and Ben & Catherine are ever — Yours unchanged and loving brother — Joseph Severn